Rice Exporters Facing discriminatory Tariff Barriers

*598. SHRI S. MADHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian rice exporters face discriminatory tariff barriers from European Countries; and

(b) if so, what are the steps taken to help Indian rice exporters?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) with a view to pro tecting the domestic rice-milling in dustry in some of their member-states, rice imports into the European Commu nity (EC) are subject to variable levies which are meimt to ensure that imports are not offered for sale within the Euro pean Community (EC) at prices lower than their internal prices for similar pro ducts. Rice (Rports from India, including Basmati rice, are subject to this levy, Accordinng to the latest Notification of the Buropean Commission dated April 8, 1994, the variabl - levies on husked and milled Bnsmati and other long-grain rice varieties have been exed at ECUs 350.07 and 603.66 per tonne respectively. Theset apply to imporjs of Basmati and long-grain varieties of rice from India. Pakistan, USA, Thailand, Uruguay, Vietnam and some others.

For Basmati rice imports, the Community provides, since December, 1986, a reduced levy of 25 per cent for imports of the first 10,000 tonnes of husked rice equivalent. The present arrangement is expected to continue until July 1996. Besides the levy concession on Basmati exports, Bangladesh as a rics-grow-ine Least Developed Country (LDC) and the 69 African Carribean Pacific countries with whom EC has preferential trading arrangements, have a specially reduced levy for their rice exports to EC, which work out propotiona'ely to just under half the normal levy rates. Besides, these countries, Egypt has also been granted 25 per cent levy concession on its rice exports to EC.

EC has not so far responded positively to Government's demarche on increasing the existing quantitative limit for the con-cessional levy for Basmati rice and to cover Basmati under its scheme of generalised preferences.

S:eps taken to enhance the export com petitiveness of Indian rice including! (i) removal of inter-state restrictions on movement of rice and suspension of the levy on superfine non-basmati rice meant for export purposes by some State Gov-ernmsnts, (ii) rationalisation of Minimum Export Prices, (iii) giving permission to exporters to import milling equipment at concessional duty under the Export Pre-moton Capital Goods Scheme, (iv) rice exporters are also eligib'e for the benoots of the 100 per cent Export Oriented Unit Scheme.

Indo-Czech economic cooperation

*599. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAM-BHAJIRAO SHINDE:

SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be phased to state:

(a) whether any agreement for Inde-Czech economic cooperation was signed during the recint visit of a Czech delegation led by the President of Czech Republic: and

(b) if so. the details thereof, indicating the main areas of cooteration identified?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir, no agreement for Indo-Czech economic cooperation was signed during the recent visit of a Czech delegation led by the President of Czecn Republic.

(b) The question does not arise.